



(Greek) Im/politeness: Predication and evaluation practices^{*}

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Abstract

This ethnomethodological study combines CA and MCA to explore the social practices of predicating and evaluating real instances of (non-)linguistic im/politeness, witnessably produced by (Greek) members in a variety of contexts. It locates category-bound predicates that the incumbents themselves invoke or are imputed to them by others, as instances of first-order (im)politeness (Watts 2003) or (im)politeness1 (Eelen 2001). As depositories of common-sense knowledge, MCDs/categories offer a glimpse of the native practices/concepts of im/politeness, but are indexically and occasionedly accomplished by members, consonantly with their mutual accountability and the ‘moral order’ of society (Garfinkel 2002).

Keywords: MCDs, category-boundedness, moral order, accountability, positive/negative politeness, culture, national identity

1 Theoretical framework

In order to examine Greek members’ perception of im/politeness, I utilize *Conversation Analysis*, that is the *turn-taking* mechanism and the accompanying concepts of *adjacency*, *preference*, and *recipient design* (Sacks et al. 1974), together with *Membership Categorization Analysis*¹ (Fitzgerald 2012; Hester & Eglin (eds.)

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¹ For a detailed exposition, see Μακρή-Τσιλιπάκου (2014).

1997; Schegloff 2007), formulated as *Membership Categorization Device(s)*.² The relevant concept of *category-boundedness* (Sacks 1972, [1972]1974, 1992) states that certain activities are expectably and properly done by persons who are the incumbents of particular categories (Sacks 1992, vol. 1: 249), and can, by extension (Watson 1978: 106), apply to “rights, entitlements, obligations, knowledge, attributes and competences” (Hester & Eglin 1997: 5), and other such predicates. Additionally, category and activity are *co-selected*.

The rationale for the combination of CA and MCA is that “both the sequential and categorizational aspects of social interaction inform each other” (Hester & Eglin, 1997: 2) since categories are “procedurally consequential” in interaction (Antaki & Widdicombe 1998: 4), and this is visible in members’ exploitation of the structures of conversation –as, for instance, when doing (category) repair (cf. Makri-Tsilipakou 2015a). The perceived sequential/categorial interconnection yields a holistic, Ethnomethodological approach to interaction.³

Membership categories, in particular, are *inference rich* (Sacks 1992, vol. 1: 41) because there are strong expectations and conventions associated with them and so they are believed to house *culturally* based im/politeness *stereotypes* (cf. Mills 2009; Sifianou & Tzanne 2010). However, they are locally *occasioned* and so highly *indexical*, their meaning depending on each occasion. As “features of socially organized activities, [they] are particular and contingent accomplishment of the production and recognition work of parties to the activity” (Zimmerman & Pollner 1970: 94) that members engage in while going about their everyday lives, ever aware of the “moral order” –“the world of daily life known in common with others and with others taken for granted” (Garfinkel 1967: 35)– of the “immortal, ordinary society” (Garfinkel 2002: 24). In this regard, individual im/politeness cannot be effectively separated from its social counterpart as culture is hearably produced in interaction.

To the extent that categories

² “Any collection of membership categories, containing at least a category, which may be applied to some population containing at least a Member, so as to provide, by the use of some rules of applications, for the pairing of at least a population Member and a categorization device member. A device is then a collection plus rules of application” (Sacks 1992, vol. 1: 246).

³ Ethnomethodology views “the objective reality of social facts as an ongoing accomplishment of the concerted activities of daily life (...) [and] analyzes those everyday activities as members’ methods for making those same activities visibly-rational-and-reportable-for-all-practical-purposes, i.e. ‘accountable’, as organizations of commonplace everyday activities” (Garfinkel 1967: vi).

“are used to accomplish various practical tasks –e.g. to deliver judgments, warrant further inferences, ascribe actions, project possible events, explain prior events, account for behaviour, etc.– it becomes clear that categorization work is embedded in a *moral order*” (Jayyusi [1984] 2014: 2)

Accordingly, categorization involves *accountability* of members’ actions and omissions: “the everpresent *possibility* of having one’s actions, circumstances, and even, one’s descriptions characterised in relation to one’s presumed membership in a particular category” (West & Fenstermaker 2002: 541).

Considering the difficulty of making sense in view of “the in-determinacy of the meaning of utterances” (Mills 2003: 29), which implies that you “can never be totally confident about the ascription of politeness or impoliteness to particular utterances, even for members of our own communities of practice” (Holmes & Schnurr 2005: 122), I choose to watch members do the ascription themselves as *participants* or *metaparticipants* to situated interactions. This is a way to avoid imposing the researcher’s specific understanding of politeness –inevitably rooted in her own ideological/cultural position/stance–, in accordance with the ethnomethodological/conversation analytic perspective, which does not prioritize the analyst’s point of view.

Specifically, I look for explicit evaluations of im/politeness, which belong to *first order (im)politeness*, i.e. “the various ways in which polite behaviour is perceived and talked about by members of socio-cultural groups. It encompasses, in other words, commonsense notions of politeness”, as opposed to *second order (im)politeness*, which is “a theoretical construct” (Watts et al. 1992: 3; see also Watts 2003). Note, however, that this distinction hardly arises for the ethnomethodological study of talk-in-interaction as analysts strive to adopt members’ categories.

More specifically, and within Eelen’s 3-way subdivision of *politeness1* –that is “politeness-as-practice”–, I search for instances of *classificatory* politeness, which is “used as a categorizational tool: it covers hearers’ judgments (in actual interaction) of other people’s interactional behaviour as ‘polite’ or ‘impolite’”, and of *metapragmatic*

politeness, that is “instances of talk about politeness as a concept, about what people perceive politeness to be all about” (Eelen 2001: 35).⁴

Moreover, and crucially so, the current theoretical assumption (Eelen 2001: 109) is that

“(im)politeness occurs not so much when the speaker produces behaviour but rather when the hearer evaluates that behaviour...the very essence of (im)politeness lies in this evaluative moment. Whether it involves hearers evaluating speakers, speakers evaluating themselves or informants evaluating hypothetical speakers of utterances, the evaluative moment is always present [...] Evaluation is thus the basic, primordial mode of being of (im)politeness”

So, this study is an attempt to capture the evaluative moment; to take snapshots of im/politeness as it happens in everydayness.

2 The data

The authentic Greek data (163 instances) have been culled from a wide range of contexts I have chanced upon over several years as a habitual observer/member of the Modern Greek community, which makes me an “insider” (Kadar & Haugh 2013: 85), thus fulfilling Garfinkel’s prerequisite of “unique adequacy” for researchers: “to be competent practitioners of whatever social phenomena they are studying” (ibid. 2002: 6). Quite a few instances come from (unscripted) television, blogs and newspaper internet sites. The important role of media output in civic life has been amply acknowledged by conversation analysts (Hutchby 2006; Sidnell 2010). Personally, I have repeatedly utilized this kind of data in my work.

⁴ The third kind of *expressive* politeness¹ “refers to politeness encoded in speech, to instances where the speaker aims at polite behaviour: the use of honorifics or terms of address in general, conventional formulaic expressions (thank you, excuse me, ...), different request formats, apologies, etc.’ (ibid.).

3 Analysis

Harvey Sacks has referred in *passim* to the concept of politeness, but his account of interaction “subordinate[s] considerations which might be termed ‘politeness’ to ones which might be termed ‘technically constitutive’ or ‘sequence organizational’” (Schegloff 1992: xii), i.e. turn-taking violations (e.g. interruptions),⁵ which might be “vernacularly formulated” by reference to politeness, while they may be less a matter of normative etiquette and more a matter of members’ rights/interests as distributed by the turn-taking organization (Schegloff 1992: xiii-xiv). The first excerpt sheds light on this aspect of im/politeness.

► During a parliamentary debate on the draft law on tourism (7/2014) by the then ruling New Democracy Party government, Panagiotis Kouroumbilis (K) –the opposition Syriza Party parliamentary representative– repeatedly calls for his governmental counterpart, current speaker Adonis Georgiadis (G), to prove the claim that there has been considerable increase in tourism revenue, by depositing the relevant documents.

*Excerpt 1*⁶

- 1 Γ: Με πολύ σεβασμό σας λέω ότι τα κρατάω στο χέρι μου για να τα καταθέσω τόσην ώρα. ή. Εάν δεν κάνετε όλη αυτή τη φασαρία θα τα είχα ήδη καταθέσει. Και σας
→ παρακαλώ πάρα πολύ: επειδή είστε τρομερά αγενής διαρκώς, σας παρακαλώ πάρα πολύ να μάθετε ότι σ’ αυτήν την αίθουσα ο καθένας ακούει τον άλλο.(.) Εντά[ξει];
- 2 Κ: [Επειδή σας ακούω
[()
- 3 Γ: [ΕΝΤΑΞΕΙ;
- 4 Κ: Επειδή σας [ακούω
- 5 Γ: [Δεν έχετε περισσότερα δικαιώματα από τους άλλους εδώ. (.) Εντάξει;
- ((παραλείπονται συνεισφορές))
- 11 Γ: ↑Δεν έχετε δικαίωμα να διακόπτετε τον ομιλητή. (.)
↑Δεν το ‘χετε μάθει τόσα χρόνια εδώ πέρα μέσα; (.)
↑Δεν το ‘χετε μάθει τόσα χρόνια;
- ((παραλείπονται συνεισφορές))
- 16 Γ: → ((φωνάζει))↑Να μάθετε αγωγή και κανόνες συμπεριφοράς!
→ (.) ↑Να μάθετε αγωγή και κανόνες συμπεριφοράς! (.)

⁵ See Makri-Tsilipakou (1994, 2015b).

⁶ See Appendix for transcription conventions.

→ ↑Να μάθετε αγωγή και κανόνες συμπεριφοράς! Δεν θα σας μάθω εγώ!

- 1 G: With all due respect I am telling you that I have been holding them in my hands all this time in order to deposit them. h. If you had not made all this fuss I would have already deposited them. And could you
→ please because you have been constantly terribly impolite, could you please learn that in this chamber everybody listens to everybody else (.) Oka[y?
- 2 K: [It's because I have been listening to you [()
- 3 G: [OKAY?
- 4 K: It's because I have been listening [to you
- 5 G: [You are no more entitled than anybody else here. (.) Okay?
- ((turns omitted))
- 11 G: ↑You have no right to interrupt the speaker. (.)
↑Haven't you learned that all these years in here?
(.)↑Haven't you learned anything in all these years?
- ((turns omitted))
- 16 G: → ((shouting))↑You should learn manners and etiquette!
→ (.) ↑You should learn manners and etiquette! (.) ↑You
→ should learn manners and etiquette! I'm not going to teach you!

Georgiadis reacts by categorizing Kouroumbilis as “constantly terribly impolite”⁷ (Turn 1). The predicates that are co-selected with this category are explicitly stated as “you have no right to interrupt” (T11), “learn that in this chamber everybody listens to everybody else” (T1), and also “you should learn manners and etiquette” (repeated three times) (T16), unambiguously referencing im/politeness.

Though the turn-taking system in parliamentary debates is a modified one –as compared to the genre of conversation– allowing for pre-allocation of turn order and turn length, constant interrupting is often the mode as, in such highly confrontational contexts unlike in ordinary interaction, the preference is for disagreement rather than for agreement (Kotthoff 1993; Poullos 2002) –or the preference for agreement is temporarily suspended, if you will–, because representatives need to defend party choices and display their combat effectiveness to their constituency.

⁷ I use the terms polite/impolite generically in my translations.

Parliamentary debates, in particular, are characterized by such a highly confrontational interactional style for a number of reasons. As Ilie (2015: 2-3) observes:

“The discursive interaction of parliamentarians is constantly marked by their institutional role-based commitments, by an ongoing, dialogically shaped institutional confrontation, and by their awareness of acting in front and for the benefit of a multilayered audience. Parliamentary debates are meant to achieve a number of institutionally specific purposes, namely position-claiming, persuading, negotiating, agenda-setting, and opinion building, usually along ideological or party lines”

It is not often the case, however that participants opt for explicit evaluations of turn-taking violations as instances of impoliteness, as these are usually dealt with through complaints and/or pleas for not being interrupted, either to the perpetrator him/herself or to the Speaker of the House, who acts as a chairperson.

So what Georgiadis is attempting to do –himself one of the loudest and most disrupting presences in the political landscape–, is to explicitly cast his opponent not only as a violator of his turn space, which is obviously true, but also as ignorant of parliamentary rules of interaction –as he refuses to listen and keeps interrupting –, himself being in the know, as if he were an elder statesman with a lot of experience when, in fact, he is much younger than Kouroumbilis both in age (b.1972 vs. b.1951) and Parliament membership (first elected 2007 vs. 1996). Additionally, he further intensifies his attack when he paints a picture of Kouroumbilis as generally lacking in good manners, beyond the ones required in parliamentary interaction –and urges him to get some, as he is not going to teach him! In this way, he projects an image of himself as being socially competent unlike his uncouth opponent.

On the basis of Georgiadis’s public record –which includes his prior membership to the far-right party LAOS, as well as his very visible, and often derided, involvement in book teleshopping–, this categorization might also be seen as an attempt on his part to reverse his own public image as a loudmouth trouble-maker, by pointing a finger to his ‘rude’ opponent, himself being now the victim, rather than the perpetrator of harassment.

So Georgiadis's *performance* (Bauman 1984) ultimately addresses the *metaparticipants*, who are vicariously taking part in the interaction by viewing it on television (Kadar & Haugh 2013: 84).

► The next excerpt is a face-to-face interaction between two middle-aged women who frequent the local swimming pool. They are in the process of changing into their clothes after having a shower, bending over their benches and with their backs to each other, when (P) suddenly turns around and starts talking to (E).

Excerpt 2

- 1 Π: ((συνωμοτικά, ψιθυριστά)) Να σου πω να προσέχεις γιατί κλέβουν εδώ πέρα. Προχθές λέει της πήραν το πορτοφόλι από την τσάντα [και την άλλη
2 Ε: ((με αγανάκτηση)) Αμάν: ρε παιδιά με αυτές τις: τις: ειδήσεις! Προφανώς όπως παντού θα υπάρχουν και εδώ κάποιοι που κλέβουν. Καινούργιο είναι αυτό; Τι σας [πιάνει πια;
3 Π: ((επεξηγητικά)) Εγώ στο λέω για να ξέρεις [για:
4 Ε: [>Και εγώ τι κάνω τόσο καιρό εδώ<; Ήρθες τώρα εσύ να μου το πεις για καινούργιο; [Έλεος ρε παιδιά!
5 Π: → [Εγώ:- >↑και να είσαι πιο ευγενική!<
6 Ε: → ((απορώντας)) Εγώ να είμαι ευγενική; Ή εσύ που έρχεσαι και μου λες αυτές τις: τις:- άντε τώρα να μη πω! Περίεργη αντίληψη για την ευγένεια έχετε! Άκου να είμαι ευγενική. Χμ!

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- 1 P: ((whispering confidentially)) You know what you should be careful because people steal around here. The other day they say she had her wallet stolen from her bag [and the other
2 E: ((indignantly)) Wow you re{particle} guys what is it with thi:s thi:s news; Obviously just like anywhere else there are some people who steal. Is this {something} new? What is it with you{PL.} [already?
3 P: ((explains)) I am telling you so that you know [becau:
4 E: [>So what {do you think} I have been doing here for so long?< Having you come and tell me about it as if it were {something} new; [Mercy you guys!
5 P: [I:- >↑and you should be
→ more polite!<
6 E: ((in sarcastic disbelief)) It's me who should be more polite; Or you who come up to me and tell me all this this- ↑there I'd better not say what! That's a funny notion of politeness that you{Pl.} have. Who could believe that I am to be polite. Humph!

P starts her telling, by employing a quasi pre-announcement “you know what?” (Terasaki [1976] 2004) (T1), as she does not wait for the recipient to produce a topicalizing next (Button & Casey 1984: 169), such as huh?, what?, etc., that would give her the go ahead with the actual announcement.

As a result, E is taken aback by the unexpected rapidity of the telling and remains silent while trying to figure out what this is all about. The moment she does, she expresses her aversion to this kind of news, which is regularly circulated in the changing room, usually in a highly melodramatic (whispering) way. She couches her dispreferred response (T2) in both *positive polite* (through the use of familiar “re” particle and in-group marker “guys”), as well as *negative polite redress* (impersonalizing her plea for abstaining from such telling through pluralization) (see Brown & Levinson 1987).⁸ As she has just rejected P’s offer to inform her of a possible danger, she goes on to accountably explain her position, i.e. that it is only a matter of demographics (T2), and so she practically questions its news status.

Sacks states that “it’s a general rule about conversation that it’s your business not to tell people what you can suppose they know” (ibid. 1992, vol. 2: 368). Otherwise, there would be all kinds of things to say, such as reciting the days of the week, reading the telephone book to somebody, pointing things out in your physical environment, etc. And so, the issue of *tellability* (Makri-Tsilipakou 2004; Sacks 1992, vol. 2: 3, 12, 157, 229) or newsworthiness or reportability arises every time members interact. Furthermore, as Terasaki ([1976] 2004: 177) notes: “The ‘news-ness’ of an item appears to be a matter collaboratively arrived at across a news delivery. Its status as ‘new’ information is not predetermined but is proposed and either ratified or rejected in the interaction”.

In this particular case, an informing (“people steal around here”) is combined with advice giving (“you should be careful”) (T1), making the interaction even more precarious as “advice giving carries problematic implications about the knowledge or competence of the intended recipient” (Heritage & Stefi 1992: 389). So, what it all boils down to is the participants’ epistemic status, which Heritage defines as the “relative epistemic access to a domain as stratified between actors such that they occupy different positions on an epistemic gradient (more knowledgeable [K+] or less knowledgeable [K-])”, adding that it “tend[s] to vary from domain to domain, as well

⁸ Both types of politeness avoid giving offence by showing *deference* (negative) or by highlighting *friendliness* (positive).

as over time, and can be altered from moment to moment as a result of specific interactional contributions” (ibid. 2012: 32-33).

It turns out that the two interactants have unequal epistemic access to the situation: As P is a newcomer to the pool, she can’t be more knowledgeable and so she has no right to inform E, who is a veteran member. So, despite being disguised as an offer, P’s informing in the form of unsolicited advice is a dispreferred first (Heritage & Stefi 1992) that gets a dispreferred second pair-part in the adjacency pair offer-acceptance/rejection of advice (Levinson 1983: 332ff.), additionally involving epistemic rights as part and parcel of the moral order (see Haugh 2013).

From a different point of view, now, in her move to share what she presents as confidential new information, P tries to shed her newcomer status by getting familiar with other members. But she, obviously, chooses the wrong formulation and/or recipient for her integration into the locker-room crowd, as E is both a seasoned member and one who despises the practice of circulating theft rumours, and so P’s bid for a closer relationship is turned down.

This instance vividly illustrates the point often made in the relevant literature that members might display different, if not outright conflicting, perceptions of im/politeness. And so: “This variability, and the moral implications of such evaluations, means that politeness is inherently argumentative”, as Kadar & Haugh (2013: 56) comment.

So far, we have examined excerpts that house categorizations of acts as non-polite. Some data from the other end of the politeness-impoliteness polarity follow.

► A relevant instance comes from the bullying case that shook Greece as the tragic victim, Vangelis Yakoumakis, a 20-year-old student of Cretan origin at the Ioannina Dairy School, was found dead after going missing for 40 days, in an apparent suicide (15/3/2015). A sympathizing former student testifies to the abuse (http://www.star.gr/Pages/Ellada.aspx?art=269549&artTitle=nees_martyries_gia_ton_vangeli_evlepa_tis_melanies_sta_cheria_tou_eklaige_gia_voitheia):

Excerpt 3

«Οι μελανιές στα χέρια του από τα χτυπήματα και τα δεσίματα ήταν συχνό φαινόμενο», «Τον κλείδωναν στις τουαλέτες και του έριχναν νερό, τον χτυπούσαν γενικά. Τον είχαν πετάξει πάνω στην ντουλάπα, είχε μείνει τρύπα στην ντουλάπα και αυτό το είχαμε πει στους καθηγητές. Κυκλοφορούσε πολλές φορές με μελανιές στα χέρια, τις είχα δει κι εγώ», «Ο Βαγγέλης ήταν ένα αρνί που

μπήκε μέσα σε μια αγέλη λύκων», «Το παλικάρι έκλαιγε για βοήθεια, αλλά δεν είχε την δύναμη να το πει με το στόμα», «Ο Βαγγέλης ήταν ευγενικός χαρακτήρας και δεν μίλησε γιατί δεν ήθελε να δημιουργήσει προβλήματα ούτε στους γονείς του, ούτε στη Σχολή, ούτε σ' αυτά τα μαλακισμένα»

"His arms were often bruised because of beatings and bindings", "They would lock him up in the toilets and splash water on him, would generally beat him up. They had thrown him against the closet, there was a hole in the closet and this we had reported to the teachers. He would many times walk around with bruises on his arms, and I had seen them myself, too", "Vangelis was a lamb who walked into a pack of wolves", "The young man was crying for help, but he did not have the strength to ask for it", "Vangelis was a polite person and did not say a word because he did not want to cause a problem to his parents or to the School or to those assholes!"

In this case, the category term “polite”, which was adopted by everyone across the board (the press, the family, the family lawyer) –and is ostensibly predicated upon the victim’s consideration of others (“he did not want to cause a problem”)–, could be interpreted as a polite subterfuge, substituting for shy, not strong enough, not assertive enough, not being able to confide in any one (not even his own family), as he was probably being bullied –as rumour has it– on account of his being perceived as not ‘man’ enough –whether a closet homosexual or not– by his tough fellow Cretans.

► On the event of the death of popular songwriter Loukianos Kilaidonis (15/7/1943-7/2/2017), fellow songwriter/composer Mikis Theodorakis (b.1925) eulogizes him (<http://www.kathimerini.gr/895377/article/epikairothta/ellada/o-mikhs-seodwraks-gia-ton-loykiano-khlahdonh>):

Excerpt 4

→ «Ο Λουκιανός Κηλαηδόνης ξεχώριζε για την ευγένεια και την γλυκύτητα του χαρακτήρα του...»

→ "Loukianos Kilaidonis stood out for courtesy and sweetness of temper..."

There is no explicit predication of the term “courtesy” (=politeness, in Greek), except for the co-occurring term “sweetness”, which might be seen as a synonym, as a co-member of the same MCD –for instance, ‘nice person’.

► Similarly, in the following excerpt, actor Vassilis Charalambopoulos (b.1970) proffers (<http://www.athenstimeout.gr/showbiz/thymonei-o-vasilis-haralampopoylos-giati>):

Excerpt 5

→ «Με κάνει να αγανακτώ η αγένεια των ανθρώπων. Όταν τη συναντώ τρελαίνομαι»

→ "I resent people's impoliteness. Whenever I stumble upon it I go crazy"

In cases such as the previous two, evaluators rely on fellow members to fill in the missing predicates. These might show some variability depending on recipients' membership in different social groups, but they are inevitably grounded in the *moral order*: what "members encounter and know [...] as perceivedly normal courses of action –familiar scenes of everyday affairs [...] For members, not only are matters so about familiar scenes, but they are so because it is morally right or wrong that they are so" (Garfinkel 1967: 35).

► While attempting to go through a narrow doorway, a woman and a man, both middle-aged, yield the right of way to each other, upon which the woman proffers her categorization of them as polite, getting the man to confirm her evaluation, thus performing both self and other evaluation. The reference is, of course, made to the prevalent practice among Greeks of not bothering to sidestep to make way for others!

Excerpt 6

1 W: → Δύο ευγενείς σπά(h)νιο φαινόμενο [hh!
2 A: [£Ναί ναι!

1 W: → Two polite {people} a rare si(h)ght [hh!
2 M: [£Yeah yeah!

The preceding fragment ushered in our discussion the evaluation of non-verbal acts, as im/politeness "includes the whole spectrum of behaviour" (Eelen 2001: iv). The next datum also deals with non-verbal displays.

► During a radio interview (Vima FM, 3/2/2015), leading Pasok party member and ex-minister of Foreign Affairs Theodoros Pangalos (b.1938) mounts an attack against the then Finance Minister, Yanis Varoufakis (b.1961), on the occasion of the

latter's visit with his British counterpart, George Osborne (2/2/2015). Pangalos finds Varoufakis's 'impoliteness' annoying, and him "most impolite" (<http://www.tovima.gr/vimafm/interviews/article/?aid=673389>).

Excerpt 7

- «Θεωρώ ότι αυτό που είναι ενοχλητικό είναι η αγένεια του Έλληνα υπουργού Οικονομικών, η οποία επιδεικνύεται με διάφορους τρόπους», «Κατ' αρχήν, ότι δεν βάζει το πουκάμισο μέσα. Αυτό είναι άθλιο. Ή το βάζεις μέσα ή δεν το φοράς. Πας στη Ντάουνινγκ Στρητ, προσαρμόζεις το ντύσιμό σου με εκείνο του οικοδεσπότη σου. Όταν όλοι φοράνε γραβάτες, δεν πας με τις παντόφλες», «Το δεύτερο είναι ότι συνεχώς έχει το χέρι στην τσέπη. Δεν ξέρω τι είναι, να πάει σε έναν ψυχίατρο! Είναι αγενέστατο να έχεις το χέρι στην τσέπη και δεν θέλω να επαναλάβω αυτό που μας έλεγε ο γυμναστής μας στο Βαρβάκειο "Κωλόπαιδα, βγάλτε το χέρι από την τσέπη γιατί ξέρω τι πιάνετε εκεί μέσα"»

- "What I consider annoying is the impoliteness on the part of the Greek Finance Minister that is displayed in different ways", "First not tucking in his shirt is hideous. You either tuck it in or you don't wear it at all. If you are going to Downing Street, you adjust your dress code to your host's. When everyone wears a tie you don't go in slippers", "Secondly, he keeps his hand in his pocket. I do not know what this is all about but he should see a psychiatrist. It is most impolite to keep you hand in your pocket, and I do not want to quote my High School Physical Education teacher "You scamps, take your hands off your pockets because I know what you are touching""



Picture 1. Varoufakis visiting Osborne

Pangalos's evaluation rests upon non-verbal display, i.e. Varoufakis's untucked shirt and hand stuck in pocket (Picture 1). As regards the first predicate, Pangalos's reasoning is that this demeanour is incongruous and at odds with the situation which calls for a specific dress code, thus showing disrespect for the (British) host. As for

the hand-in-pocket part, Pangalos goes as far as to (distastefully) insinuate that Varoufakis is constantly handling his genitals, by quoting his high school coach who used to go after the boys for the same reason, suggesting that Varoufakis should see a psychiatrist about it. Pangalos, obviously, loves his reputation as one who can't control his mouth, as part of his public image of an outspoken and candid politician.

► In the aftermath of Pangalos's pronouncement of Varoufakis as most impolite etc., Maria Bakodimou (M, b.1965), who was co-hosting a late afternoon gossip show with Fotis Sergouloupoulos (F, b.1963) at the time (Star TV, FM Live, 4/2/2015), takes issue with it.

Excerpt 8

- 1 M: Μη θυμηθώ και του Πάγκαλου! Του Πάγκαλου του φάνηκε
αγέ[νεια (.) >που δε φόραγε γραβάτα ο Βαρουφάκης!<=
2 Φ: [Καλά του Πάγκαλου!
3 M: =[Που είναι αυτή η εικόνα ο Πάγκαλος ((φουσκώνει τα=
4 Φ: [Καλά ο Πάγκαλος
5 M: =μάγουλα και διαγράφει ένα μεγάλο κύκλο με ανοιχτά τα
→ χέρια)) ένας κακοπροαίρετος το λέει και αγένεια.
6 Φ: Ναι ναι [ναι!
7 M: [Έτσι; Γιατί δε σέβεται τον εαυτό του (.) Μπορεί
να αναπτύξει πολλά:: επιχειρήματα κάποιος βλέποντας
αυτή:

- 1 M: Not to mention Pangalos's {comment}! Pangalos thought it
was impoli[te (.) >that Varoufakis did not wear=
2 F: [What do you expect from Pangalos!
3 M: =a tie!< [When Pangalos looks like this ((puffs out=
4 F: [As for Pangalos
5 M: =her cheeks and raises her arms to trace a big circle in
the air)) that an ill-intentioned person could call it
→ impoliteness.
6 F: <Yeah yeah [yeah!
7 M: [Right; Because he doesn't respect himself.
(.) Someone could raise many arguments at the sight of
this:

M interestingly raises the possibility of Pangalos himself being called impolite on the basis of his excessive weight (Picture 2), which could be interpreted as disrespect to his own person, besides several other grounds one could possibly invoke as predicates. This rather unusual predication of im/politeness could probably be subsumed under Brown & Levinson's direct threats to Speaker's face as "breakdown of physical control over body" (ibid. 1978: 68). Otherwise, it further illustrates the situated production of categories despite their conventional associations.



Picture 2. Theodoros Pangalos

Moreover, it verifies the assumption that evaluation can also be performed by *metaparticipants*, i.e. members whose evaluations of politeness is the result of vicarious participation in an interaction that they view on television or the internet or read or hear about it. “Metaparticipant understandings are also first-order in the sense that they involve some kind of *participation* in the evaluative moment” as Kadar & Haugh (2013: 84) point out.

4 Im/politeness, accountability and culture

In this study, I have tried to navigate the waters of Modern Greek im/politeness predication and evaluation practices, as witnessed in a variety of everyday situations. Both aspects of im/politeness fetch explicit evaluations at roughly the same frequency of occurrence. Both kinds are often proffered as (non-)linguistically non-predicated general assessments of a member or of the community as a whole (cf. Excerpts 4, 5).⁹

However, it is mostly impoliteness evaluations that get to co-occur with (non-)linguistic act predicates (cf. Excerpts 1, 2, 7, 8), as compared to politeness ones (cf. Excerpts 3, 6). The reason is that these are (metapragmatic) formulations¹⁰ of *dispreferred* acts (realized as first/second adjacency pair parts). As Garfinkel & Sacks note, “doing formulating is itself for members a routine source of complaints, faults,

⁹ More instances of this kind cannot be included due to space limitations.

¹⁰ “A member may treat some part of the conversation as an occasion to describe that conversation, to explain it, or characterize it, or explicate, or translate, or summarize, or furnish the gist of it, or take note of its accordance with rules, or remark on its departure from rules. (Garfinkel & Sacks ([1970] 1987: 167).

troubles, and recommended remedies, *essentially*” (ibid. [1970] 1987: 170). In that respect, evaluators seem to need some solid grounds for holding the perpetrators especially accountable –by explicitly branding their acts as going against the moral order–, while simultaneously risking making themselves accountable in the performance of their own disaffiliative evaluation.

As regards predication per se, I must say that I was rather surprised at the overwhelming presence of *negative polite* predicates, with an emphasis on manners, etiquette etc. Here are two more data, besides the ones already presented.

► Celebrity restaurant owner Steve Kaketsis (b.1949) states he has no problem with ex-lover, singer Antzela Dimitriou, visiting his business establishment (<http://www.zougla.gr/lifestyle/article/h-nea-dilosi-tou-kaketsi-gia-ti-dimitriou-pou-8a-siziti8i>):

Excerpt 9

Η Αντζελα δεν έχει έρθει στο μαγαζί μου. Πάμε παρακάτω (.) Εδώ το μαγαζί έχει μία άδεια, που είναι δημόσιος χώρος. Εγώ είμαι
→ ένας ευγενής άνθρωπος «Καλησπέρα σας, καλώς ήρθατε, καλό φαγητό»

Antzela has not come to my place of business. Let's move on {to the next question} (.) This is a licensed place that is a
→ public place. Myself, I am a polite person “Good evening, welcome, enjoy your dinner”

► TV presenter Katerina Karavatou (b.1974) outlines her (negative polite) child upbringing philosophy (EPSILON TV, Sta Kala Kathoumena, 16/5/2015). Note that in the old days parents would expect their child to grow up “to become a decent human being” («να γίνει σωστός άνθρωπος»).

Excerpt 10

→ Έχω γαλουχήσει το παιδί μου με κάποιες αρχές. Να είναι ευγενικό: (.) να έχει καλούς τρόπους:

I have raised my kid so as to follow certain principles. To be
→ polite (.) to have good manners

So, it makes one wonder if native researchers (Makri-Tsilipakou 1991, 2001, 2003; Pavlidou 1994; Sifianou 1992) have got it all wrong describing Greece as a (predominantly) positive-polite culture, though it is true that most of the present data

were culled from public contexts, where formality in the form of negative politeness is to be expected (Sifianou 2010, Bella & Sifianou 2012), but even so one would expect more positive polite predicates.

An explanation for this absence could be that Greeks are indeed a positive polite culture and so this aspect of interaction goes largely unnoticed, uncommented upon, as it is the dominant way.

In addition, the higher volume of negative polite predicates might be attributed to the (disputed) universality of Brown and Levinson's (1987) hierarchy, which depicts negative politeness as higher up in the ranking of redressive actions. To this, I can attest that during my long career of teaching sociolinguistics courses at Aristotle University, I always had the problem of getting my students to see that positive politeness is, indeed, another form of politeness. As a rule, politeness meant distance and deference and good manners to them. So, it seems that members have no idea whatsoever that using diminutives (Makri-Tsilipakou 2003), for instance, is a sure sign of being (positively) polite (Brown & Levinson 1987: 108). Well, this is one more reason for researchers to start with members' practices/perceptions (first order politeness), before venturing into grand theories (second order politeness).

The question however remains: how come (negative) politeness has become a social value (as documented in the analysed excerpts)? Especially, when Greece is a perceivably (negatively) impolite community, as witnessed in our everyday lives when routinely skipping sorry/thank you, constantly overlapping/interrupting (Makri-Tsilipakou 1991, 1994), generally "disagreeing to agree" (Tannen & Kakava 1992), not shunning physical contact on public transportation, jumping the queue etc., is the norm?

4.1 Im/politeness and national identity

We can only speculate that the observed practice might involve matters of the Modern Greek national identity, which has been notoriously vulnerable ever since its birth. On the one hand, we have been "wrestling with the ancients" (Kitroeff 2004) in our evocations of past glory, and on the other with our European neighbors, and "so-called protectors", whom we simultaneously admire and despise as "upstarts" (Herzfeld 2013: 492). Greece's classical heritage might be a foundation of western civilization, but Greeks are often seen as "simply picturesque", if not as "over-ambitious buffoons" (Herzfeld 2013: 492), when displaying "*progonoplexia*, or

‘ancestoritis’” (Clogg [1992] 2013: 2) –with the exception of the 2004 Olympics, which served as a brief respite (Herzfeld 2013: 492), but came at a very high cost as we found out later.

As Herzfeld succinctly puts it, Greece has been a *crypto-colony* of the West: «nominally independent though practically tributary nation-state” (ibid. 2002: 900), having a “symbolic as well as material dependence on intrusive colonial power” (ibid. 2009: 173). As a result, Greeks have been striving to adopt its values to gain admission “to ‘Europe’ an entity conceived as a rather distant goal rather than as a continent that includes Greece” (ibid. 2013: 492). This is nowadays more true than ever as Greece has been relying on consecutive bailouts since 2010, while modern Greek society has been constantly vilified as (stereotypically) corrupt and lazy by European politicians (e.g. Eurogroup head Jeroen Dijsselbloem, who lamented our “waste of money on liquor and women”, 21/3/2017), and the press (e.g. German *Focus* magazine front page featuring Venus de Milo/Greece obscenely giving Europe the finger, accompanied by the caption “Betrüger in der Euro-Familie”, Fraudsters in the euro family, 22/2/2010).

If negative-politeness –coupled with formality– is not simply a means of saving the addressee’s face by showing deference, but also a means of self-enhancement (Bella & Sifianou 2012: 110), i.e. of positive self-presentation, in that the speaker projects herself/himself as educated and knowledgeable about the ways of the world – of European manners/values, in our case–, then it is no wonder Greeks opt for negative politeness. To share a personal story, quite often lately I have marveled at the sight of half-naked young women who choose to ceremoniously shake hands –rather than simply nod or say ‘hi’– when they first meet in a gym locker-room, as this is hardly the place or the activity or the apparel for such display! (cf. Makri-Tsilipakou 2001).

In view of the above, one wonders if Greekness is considered less polite than Europeaness? If it is the case that Greece is in the process of transforming into a more ‘European’ culture? Despite the Grexit sword of Damocles that has been hanging over our heads, or precisely because of it? Well, we’ll have to wait and see as we are in the midst of yet another turbulent identity-forging period.

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Appendix: Transcription conventions

Symbol	Explanation	Symbol	Explanation
xxx-	cut-off utterance	→	points to evaluations
[xxx	overlap	(.)	pause < 1"
xxx:	sound prolongation	↑	rise in pitch
xxx=	latching	xxx?	rising intonation
>xxx<	quicker talk	xxxζ	weaker rising intonation
<xxx	jump-started talk	xxx!	animated intonation
<u>xxx</u>	emphasis	xxx,	continuing intonation
XXX	louder talk	xxx.	final intonation
(xxx)	transcriber's comments	(h) hh	outbreath/laughter
()	non-transcribable	.h	inbreath
{xxx}	translation item	£xxx	smiley voice